

**Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats,
and International Relations**

Hearing on "Public Diplomacy in the Middle East"
Tuesday, February 10, 2004
Rayburn House Office Building Room 2154

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Member of the Djerejian Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World (Report entitled *Changing Minds, Winning Peace*)

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Chairman Shays,

It is an honor to appear before your important sub-committee on a subject of the highest importance to national security and emerging threats to the United States and to its homeland security. The highly negative attitude of much of the Arab world and the Muslim world towards the United States in the last few years represents the underlying source of threat to American national security, often referred to only by its overt manifestation in the war on terrorism. Terrorism is born in an atmosphere in which organized groups of individuals take the hatred of the United States to a vicious extreme, but they act in an atmosphere of hostile attitudes to American policy that is widely shared in their societies and loudly blared forth on their television and radio as well as given religious sanction in many sermons in their mosques.

This widespread animosity must become a special target of our international relations and foreign policy and not only a focused target of our armed forces and intelligence agencies. We cannot hope to kill every mosquito unless we dry up the swamps in which they breed in profusion; nor can we expect to dry them up by ourselves or even to fully grasp how the swamps fester or how the mosquitoes breed without the help and understanding of those who live on the land and whose life and livelihood are most directly threatened by the poisonous bite of terrorism. In other words, we need to be focused on building bridges of cooperation with those in these countries who share our abhorrence of terrorism and wish to reach a stage of peaceful interaction between their peoples and our own.

It is not so hard to imagine a positive image of America. One hundred years ago America was the most preferred foreign country in many parts of the world that now exhibit this great animosity. When President Woodrow Wilson articulated the Fourteen Points on which the United States entered World War One and when he came to the Paris Peace Conference the United States was greatly admired as a new kind of force in world politics and a great source of hope for the still unfree peoples of the Ottoman Empire and other parts of the world. Our values and leadership were so much admired; there was as yet no experience or propaganda that spelled out the present widespread damaging theory that America has good universal values, but that we practice those values only for ourselves and violate them with determined hypocrisy when we act abroad especially in relation to Arabs and Muslims.

The spread of these hostile attitudes towards the United States not only provides for easy recruitment to violent groups, but creates an atmosphere in which they can move more freely and with more local help and approval. We need to narrow the support for these hostile ideas and strengthen the standing of those within these societies who would oppose them and who could eventually marginalize them.

Terrorism and other symptoms of hatred cannot be defeated unless we change the balance between the support and opposition to the terrorists and their actions within their societies. We cannot do it directly and we cannot replace the essential internal forces which are the only forces that have the long term staying power and the authenticity and legitimacy to marginalize and defeat haters willing to engage in terrorism.

The working group on Public Diplomacy, on which I was proud to serve, traveled to many countries and we learned one thing above all: The focus must be on the younger

generation, the millions of young men and women in the Arab world and Muslim world who presently have no realistic prospect of ever receiving a modern education, having a good job and earning a decent income.

Hating us is a second choice for most of these young people. They would prefer and they hope for a good or at least decent life. Many of these young people see American and American-style education as the key to a different future. Their present education is most likely to be rote learning with inadequate preparation in the basic skills necessary for a competitive chance at employment in the global economy. We found young men and women dreaming of learning English, getting a chance to study in American universities, and playing a role in peacefully changing their own societies.

We in America hold the keys to this door of hope and opportunity; we need to learn to use these keys more effectively, more widely, and in a more targeted manner for these young men and women from the Arab and Muslim world.

The second thing we learned everywhere and in no uncertain terms, was that we had to focus on solving the Israeli-Palestinian problem. This issue has penetrated deeply into the consciousness of young people everywhere in these countries as a basic point of departure for hostility towards the United States and as an issue of emotional and intellectual centrality. We cannot pretend otherwise. Even those who see that the conflict is a diversion from more pressing domestic problems in their societies must recognize how much it colors the perception of the United States and how much it angers those in the Arab and Muslim world. We need not be afraid to discuss this issue openly and we need to be forthright in expressing our concern and identification with Israel together with our commitment to a dignified two-state solution. We need to be able to show that we are working toward a peaceful solution on a continuous serious basis and will make this a core purpose of our foreign policy. We need to recognize that the hostility to Israel and the ignorance of Judaism is not only an Israeli problem, but an American problem. This problem makes it much harder to enlist leaders in the Arab and Muslim world and their people as a part of the solution to the war on terrorism and the search for peace. The challenge is to help them be part of the solution and not part of the problem, apologizing for terrorism and resisting fair and just peace proposals and steps.

Third, our approach has to be a strong mix of public media and mass communication, on the one hand, and the most intimate intensive exchange programs, on the other hand, with emphasis on the opportunity for interaction between young people of the region and young Americans. We do not yet have the subtlety of understanding and expression to compete with the myriad of local media and satellite channels that are poisoning the public against us, but we have to try and be in the game. At the same time we have to invest much more in face-to-face communication including direct visits to America by people of the Arab and Muslim world as well as of Americans to them. A big part of this exchange has to be education-related.

Most of the time and in most contexts we are simply outside the conversation that is taking place within these societies. We need to learn to hear those conversations and to speak clearly, forthrightly and empathically in that conversation. Right now we mostly do not show up and we do not get heard or even get to hear.

My last point in this section on public diplomacy is to emphasize the importance of bringing Arab Americans into the conversation and into our public diplomacy as well as bringing American Jews into greater and more frequent contact with the Arab and

Muslim world. The strong hostile stereotype of Jewish control of America is matched by total ignorance of the diversity of American Jews and the nature of their real but minority role in American political and economic life.

I must also emphasize the critical need to focus these efforts at the White House and to make structural changes which would allow the private sector and the foundation world to play a much more active and central role in changing the relationship between the American people and the Muslims and Arabs of the world community. All of these recommendations require firm strategic coordination with our President's foreign policy and national security policy along with the President's clear articulation of those policies and value choices to the people of the Arab and Muslim world. This is not a problem that will be solved only on a lower level. We must be aware that we live in a world in which a Presidential remark in Des Moines can be headlines in Riyadh or Cairo before the American reader wakes up the next morning.

PART TWO:

TRACK TWO DIPLOMACY AND AMERICAN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

In inviting me to testify, the Chairman of the sub-committee asked me to reflect also on the twenty nine years of my work traveling to Arab capitals and to Israel in an attempt to facilitate readiness for peace-making on the part of Israelis and Arabs from intellectuals to political leaders and heads of State. This is often called Track Two Diplomacy. My interlocutors have included Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese as well as many Arabs from countries not on the front lines of the conflict from Morocco to Kuwait and including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, Oman and Qatar.

Track Two Diplomacy used to be about bringing Israelis and Palestinians together to discuss their conflict and to try to problem solve to the point of reaching agreements on any issues that would help to resolve the conflict or at least to move it toward resolution. Over the years however the problem of reaching a conceptual solution or even an outline of a full agreement has been achieved and the main problem now is to create the political will among the leadership and a critical mass of political society to move to implement a solution. We need to move toward a negotiated peace and end the practice of unilateral actions which undermines any possibility of building such political will. Leaders must feel empowered and even impelled to reach for coordinated solutions. Moreover, it has become evident that a big part of the problem is the lack of internal unified political vision within each party. There is a need for Arab national support to help the Palestinians reach such a positive peace unity as well as to help convince the Israeli people that there will be a real end to conflict once the Palestinians have a viable independent state in more or less the borders of June 4, 1967 with agreement to live side by side in permanent peace with Israel.

At this time I think it is important to point out that those of us engaged in peace-making efforts were having much greater success in balancing hostility with support and friendly relations when we were actively engaged in positive regional change efforts such as the MENA conferences and the multilateral working groups of the Madrid process. These ancillary efforts to the political and diplomatic tracks allowed many Arabs and Israelis in civil society, those without a global voice and without an avenue for contact with us, to find Americans and others of shared interests and common professional involvement. Whether they were business people, politicians or water technologists they began to find a counterpart in America and elsewhere and so were less isolated within their own cultural and political cognitive ghetto. We did not deal adequately with issues of culture, religion and education in the decade after Madrid, but we were getting to those core issues by beginning with the less emotionally explosive issues of water, economy and environment.

I have found that maintaining long-term relationships allows a person to gain not only access to people of authority and decision making in the local societies, but to have the type of access that leads to deeper and more truthful conversations. These types of relationships allows continued communication even in hard times when hope is being lost as well as in moments of hopefulness when it seems progress can be made. The unofficial contact can be especially helpful when formal communication is blocked by crisis and by mutual recrimination as is so often the case between Arabs and Israelis and even between Americans and the Arab leaders and their key advisors.

I have learned that the informal and unofficial channels allow the exploration of new ideas and new approaches with deniability to leaders and with the advantage of having

people involved with a greater than average commitment to peace and reconciliation. These long term informal relationships afford a much deeper opportunity for mutual education across the divides of culture, language and political systems. I have often found that the lack of mutual understanding about political systems and decision making systems is one issue that is easier to talk about in unofficial discussion than in formal negotiations. Across the divide between democracy and monarchy and democracy and military rule these issues create deep misunderstandings about intentions and about the range and limits of flexibility in negotiations.

Over the years I have had the privilege and opportunity to get to know the keys leaders of many important countries in the region and to develop close relationships with their top advisors and confidants. I have tried to use these channels to facilitate better understanding and better communication between and among the parties and with the United States as well.

The American not-for-profit world of NGO's, think tanks, universities, foundations and peace and development oriented organizations can establish a wide range of relationships in countries with which the United States has official difficulties or barriers. These relationships can be based on shared commitments to peace and stability and economic growth and not simply political negotiations. Through this community of NGOs we can reach individuals reluctant to make contact with American officials or those officials not known to the American government because of their informal social and political influence. We extend the reach of our country and the possibilities for peace when we utilize these types of informal, track two relationships.